

The Bayeux Tapestry through the ages

By [Marie Lebert](#), version of 7 October 2016.



The Bayeux Tapestry is an early medieval (11th century) embroidered cloth nearly 70 metres (68.38 metres, 224.3 feet) long and about 50 centimetres (between 18 and 21 inches) high, which depicts the Norman Conquest of England by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, culminating in the Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066). The Tapestry consists of 58 scenes embroidered on linen with coloured woolen yarns. The final scenes are lacking. The Tapestry has a full-size replica in Reading, England, dating 1886 as well as recent projects imagining and recreating the final scenes, for example in Alderney, Channel Islands, or in Geraldine, New Zealand.

* [The events depicted in the Tapestry](#)

* [Who commissioned it?](#)

* [The Tapestry over the centuries](#)

* [An embroidered masterpiece](#)

* [A testimony of its time](#)

* [A full-size replica in Reading, England](#)

* [A steel mosaic in Geraldine, New Zealand](#)

* [A finale created in Alderney, Channel Islands](#)

* [A few links](#)

[\[PDF version\]](#)

[\[French version\]](#)

The events depicted in the Tapestry



The Tapestry tells the story of the events of 1064–1066 culminating in the Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066). It begins with Harold's trip to Normandy (in 1064) and finishes with the Battle of Hastings and Harold's death two years later.

The two main protagonists are: (a) Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, Edward's brother-in-law, the most powerful Saxon earl and the leader of Saxon noblemen, who was recently crowned King of England (in January 1066) after the death of Edward the Confessor (King of England from 1042 to 1066) with no children and no clear successor; (b) William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, who claimed that Edward the Confessor chose him as his successor, and sent Harold to Normandy in 1064 as his messenger, with Harold's oath to William (but no way to know what the oath was about) on the sacred relics of Bayeux.

After Harold was crowned King of England, William ordered a fleet of ships to be built in order to cross the Channel and invade England. The Norman invaders reached the English coast and, after a rocky trip, built a motte and bailey in Hastings to defend their position.

The Battle of Hastings was fought on 14 October 1066 less than three weeks after the Battles of Fulford (16 September 1066) and Stamford Bridge (25 September 1066) (with no mention of these first two battles in the Tapestry). The English fought on foot behind a shield wall, whilst most Normans were on horses, at least in the Tapestry. A bloody battle shows troops being

slaughtered and dismembered corpses littering the ground. William even raised his helmet to show his face in order to reassure his troops that he was still alive and well. Despite his bravery, King Harold was killed. The final remaining scene (but not the last one, which got lost) shows the English troops fleeing the battlefield.

Latin inscriptions (tituli) were included in many scenes to briefly explain the event being depicted or point out names of people and places, as a simple commentary that could be understood by everyone who could read. Situated in the central band (and occasionally in the top border) and embroidered with dark blue (almost black) yarn, the Latin tituli (2,000 words) are in Latin capital letters and sometimes uncials.



The Bayeux Tapestry essentially depicts a Norman viewpoint. However, Harold is shown as brave and his soldiers are not belittled. But the Tapestry is generally seen as an apologia for the Norman Conquest, as well as a tool for political propaganda for the Normans and personal emphasis on William the Conqueror. While historical accuracy may be distorted, the Bayeux Tapestry is a unique visual document of the early medieval times with regards to civil and military architecture, weapons, navigation and everyday life. The picture of Halley's Comet, which appears in the upper border of scene 32, is the first known picture of the comet... and was a bad omen at that time.

What happened then? After the Battle of Hastings, William still had to conquer England. He marched from Hastings, crossing the Thames at Wallingford, and then on towards London. He received the surrender of the London noblemen at Berkhamsted after cutting the food supplies. William's coronation as King of England took place on Christmas Day, 1066, at Westminster Abbey (which had been built by Edward the Confessor).

William was King of England until 1087, while also ruling the Norman Duchy. He started building the White Tower (later called the London Tower) with limestones imported from Caen, Normandy. As the Pope had supported William in his claim to the English throne, William also kept his promise to build an abbey after his victory at the Battle of Hastings. The abbey became known as Battle Abbey, and the high altar was built at the place where Harold was killed.

Who commissioned the Tapestry?



Through the centuries, many historians expressed their own views about who might have commissioned the Tapestry in England or in France. According to them, the Bayeux Tapestry could have been commissioned and/or created between 1066 and 1083 by Queen Mathilde, William the Conqueror's wife, and her ladies-in-waiting, before being presented to Odo, bishop of Bayeux and William's half-brother, to adorn the Bayeux Cathedral. The Tapestry could also have been commissioned and/or created between 1162 and 1167 by Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I, King of England (and William the Conqueror's fourth son) and her ladies-in-waiting. There were many

other suggestions.

Most historians now think that the Tapestry was likely commissioned by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, William's half-brother, before he was imprisoned in 1082 or after his release from prison in 1088, or during his time as Earl of Kent before he returned to Bayeux in 1092. Odo of Bayeux is himself one of the main characters in the Tapestry. He rallies the Norman troops in battle while brandishing his baton or mace. As a cleric, he has no right to wear a spear but he has the right to hit his enemies without spreading any blood.

What about the location of the Tapestry workshop? Suggestions for locations are as numerous as suggestions for commissioners. The Tapestry could have been created in Canterbury (Kent), in London, in Winchester (Hampshire) or in Worcester (West Midlands). Or even in France, in Saumur or in Bayeux. As the first written reference to the Tapestry only dates back from 1476, four centuries after its completion, this is difficult to know. The Tapestry was then displayed annually in the Bayeux Cathedral (built in the 1070s and completed in 1077) during many years, before becoming a rock-star tapestry a few centuries later with exhibitions in the Louvre in Paris, before getting its own museum in Bayeux in 1983.

The Tapestry over the centuries

The first written record of the Bayeux Tapestry is a 1476 inventory of the Bayeux Cathedral compiled by Louis d'Harcourt. The inventory listed the Tapestry as item 262 and described it as "a very long and narrow hanging on which are embroidered figures and inscriptions comprising a representation of the conquest of England" ("une tente tres longue et estroicte de telle a broderie..."). The inventory also mentioned that the Tapestry was displayed in the nave of the cathedral every year during one week, for the Feast Day of the Relics of Bayeux, from 1st to 8 July. One century later, the Tapestry survived the sack of Bayeux by the Huguenots in 1562.



As mentioned [in Wikipedia](#), the next certain written record is from 1724, with Antoine Lancelot sending a report to the French "Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres" (Royal Academy of Inscriptions and Fine Literature) concerning a sketch he had received about a work relating to William the Conqueror. Antoine Lancelot had no idea whether the original was a sculpture or a painting though he thought it could be a tapestry. Despite his further enquiries, he discovered no more.

A few years later, Bernard de Montfaucon, a Benedictine scholar, found that the sketch was of a small portion of a tapestry preserved at the Bayeux Cathedral. He published drawings and a detailed description of the full Tapestry in 1729-30 in the first two volumes of his 5-volume book "Les Monuments de la Monarchie Française" (The Monuments of the French Monarchy). The drawings were by Antoine Benoît, one of the ablest draughtsmen of that time.

The first brief account of the Tapestry in English was published in 1743 by William Stukeley, in his book "Palaeographia Britannica". The first detailed account in English was written by Smart Lethieullier, who was living in Paris in 1732-33, and who knew Antoine Lancelot and Bernard de Montfaucon. This detailed account was only published in 1767, as an appendix to Andrew Ducarel's book "Anglo-Norman Antiquities".

In 1792, during the French Revolution, the Tapestry was confiscated as public property to be used for covering military wagons. It was rescued from a wagon by Lambert-Léonard Le Forestier, a lawyer living in Bayeux, who stored it in his house until the troubles were over, when he sent it to the city administrators for safekeeping. The Tapestry was then featured in an inventory, among books and other objects belonging to the Bayeux Cathedral. This inventory was compiled by the French Fine Arts Commission, a commission created to safeguard national treasures after the looting of the same treasures during the Terror, the darkest time of the French Revolution.

The exhibition of the Tapestry in the Louvre in 1797 caused a sensation, with "Le Moniteur", a major French newspaper which normally dealt with foreign affairs, reporting on it on its first two pages. The Tapestry went back to Bayeux then.



In 1803, the French Fine Arts Commission required the Tapestry to be sent back to Paris for display. Napoleon was planning an invasion of England in 1804, and thought that displaying the Tapestry could help in making his invasion plans popular. When he abandoned these plans, the propaganda value of the Tapestry was lost and it was returned to Bayeux.

In 1816, the existence of the Tapestry began causing great interest in England. The Society of Antiquaries of London commissioned Charles Stothard, its historical draughtsman, to Bayeux in order to make an accurate hand-coloured facsimile of the Tapestry. His drawings were then engraved by James Basire Jr. and published by the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1819-23. Stothard's images are still of value as a record of the Tapestry as it was before its main restoration in 1860. Are they these images that later inspired the creation of the full-size tapestry replica in Reading, England?

From 1842, the Tapestry was permanently (and not occasionally any more) in display, first in a special-purpose room in the Bayeux Public Library (as the first "book" of the public library) and then – from 1913 – in the former Bayeux Deanery.

The Tapestry got into hiding in 1870 with the threatened invasion of Normandy in the Franco-Prussian War, in 1913 during the First World War and in 1939-1944 during the German Occupation of France and the Normandy Landings, that started with the D-Day (6 June 1944) and lasted the whole month, destroying part of Bayeux. The Gestapo took the Tapestry to the Louvre in late June 1944. Heinrich Himmler coveted the work, regarding it as "important for our glorious and cultured Germanic history", and attempted to send the Tapestry to Berlin in August 1944, with no success. After the Liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944, the Tapestry was put on public display in the Louvre, before being returned to Bayeux in 1945.

Since 1983, the Tapestry has had its own museum, named the William the Conqueror's Centre (Centre Guillaume le Conquérant) within the [Bayeux Museum](#) (Musée de Bayeux). In 2007, the now world famous Tapestry has joined the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, an international programme set up to safeguard the documentary heritage of humanity.

An embroidered masterpiece



While the Bayeux Tapestry was not unique in the 11th century, it is remarkable for being the sole surviving example of early medieval narrative needlework. Tapestries as wall-hangings were common by the 10th century, in England and Normandy, with 9th-century tapestry fragments still existing in Scandinavia. These tapestries adorned wealthy houses and churches, showing the skills of the English or Norman seamstresses who made them. There are 12th-century mentions of other wall-hangings in Normandy and France, but none of these wall-hangings have survived.

The Bayeux Tapestry is not a tapestry in the strictest sense. It is an embroidery, stitched (and not woven) with coloured woolen yarns on a linen cloth. A broad central band is surrounded with narrow upper and lower decorative borders.

Nine linen panels measuring around 50 centimetres (19.68 inches) in width are of unequal length (from 3 to 14 metres – 8 to 45 feet). They were sewn together after each was embroidered and the joins were disguised with subsequent embroidery. The borders do not line up well at the first join but the later joins are practically invisible. The broad central band measures roughly 33 centimetres (13 inches) and the two upper and lower borders measure about 7 centimetres (2.75 inches) each. The total length of the Tapestry is 68.38 meters (224.3 feet).

There are eight main shades of woolen yarn. As explained by Michael Linton, a textile technician by trade and the creator of "[1066: A Medieval Mosaic](#)": "The Tapestry was hand-stitched onto an off-white linen cloth (with 54 threads to the inch) using coloured two-ply wool. The wool was coloured using three vegetable dyes before the wool was spun. The eight different coloured wools used to embroider the off-white linen cloth include five main colours (terracotta, blue green, sage green, buff, blue) and three secondary colours (dark green, yellow, dark blue)."

The three vegetable dyes were madder for the reds, dyer's rocket for yellow and indigo dye (made from woad) for blues and greens. Laid yarns were couched in place with yarn of the same or contrasting colour. Later repairs were worked in light yellow, orange, and light greens.



There are two main stitching points: a stem stitch for outlining figures and lettering, and a couch(ing) stitch (known as the Bayeux stitch) for filling in figures. The two other stitching points are the chain stitch and the split stitch.

The Tapestry portrays 626 people (including 15 characters who can be identified with their names written in Latin, as well as three women and three children), 202 horses or mules, 35 dogs, 505 animals of all sorts, 37 buildings (including fortresses), 41 ships or boats and 37 trees or groups and trees, with 57 Latin inscriptions. These figures are excerpts from Simone Bertrand's work. They slightly vary in other sources.

The borders mainly depict real animals (birds, lions, dogs, deer, camels) and imaginary creatures (dragons breathing fire, griffins, centaurs). These animals are often represented in pairs, facing each other, sometimes separated by diagonal lines or floral motifs. Several scenes from Aesop's Fables (that later inspired the fabulist Phaedrus) adorn the borders, for example the Fox and the Crow, the Wolf and the Lamb, and the Wolf and the Crane.

In certain parts of the upper border, the series of animals is interrupted, when the illustrations of the central panel take the whole space, for example with the ship's sails or the roofs of some buildings. Similarly, in the final scenes of the Tapestry, the lower border is used to illustrate the dead on the battlefield.

A linen backing cloth was sewn on the original embroidered linen cloth in 1724, to protect the Tapestry and make it easier to hang it in the Bayeux Cathedral. Large ink numerals were written around 1800 on the recent backing cloth to enumerate each scene. The Tapestry was restored in the early 18th century and in 1842. A major restoration took place after 1860, with the cloth darned in 120 places to strengthen the fabric and with 518 fragments added to patch it up. Some embroidery was also reworked, especially in the final scene, with synthetic dyes for the yarn.

A testimony of its time



While Norman political propaganda or personal emphasis on William the Conqueror may have distorted the historical accuracy of the story, the Bayeux Tapestry presents a unique 11th-century visual document with regards to civil and military architecture, weapons, navigation and elements of everyday life.

Most civil, religious and military monuments can be easily identified in the Tapestry, for example the castles of Edward in Winchester and Westminster and the castles of William in Rouen and Bayeux. We also see Mont Saint-Michel and Westminster Abbey.

It is easy to distinguish the English from the Normans: the English wear a moustache and long hair while the Normans have short hair and clean-shaven faces. Clerics can be distinguished by their tonsure.

As related by the historians Pierre Bouet and François Neveux on the [Bayeux Museum's website](#), "the warriors wear knee-length tunics with a belt around their waist and with underneath breeches (underpants) hidden under the hose, which covered the legs and were fastened to the breeches. The aristocrats wear cloaks, either short or long, and fastened with a brooch. The warriors don't wear gloves and fight with bare hands, with weaponry both defensive and offensive, often carrying spears (to bring down their opponents), swords (a last resort in close combat) and shields. They wear a hauberk, which covers their entire body down to the knees, with a slit at the front and back to allow them to ride. The hauberk consists of a leather tunic covered with metal plates of various shapes and secured by rivets. Some fighters wear coats of mail, which were not common yet at the time but were more widely used later on. The head is protected by a conical nasal helmet and the body by an oblong shield."

The English are all foot soldiers, with the same arms as the Normans. Norman foot soldiers are seldom represented on the Tapestry, whereas they were key to success. The Norman archers are only featured twice, at the beginning and at the end of the battle.

Not all scenes of the Tapestry are battle scenes. The preparation of a meal is also depicted: bread is being made, soup is being cooked and chickens are being roasted on a spit. The chickens are distributed to soldiers, who eat on their shields. The leaders are having their meal around a table in the shape of a horseshoe.



The Normans were drinking wine (and not cider) in medieval times. One year before the Battle of Hastings, when the Normans were building the 696 boats (according to Wace in the "Roman de Rou") needed to cross the Channel, 36 (?) hectolitres of wine were delivered on site for daily consumption, as well as 100,000 litres of water to share with the horses. On the Bayeux Tapestry, a wine barrel (bound with iron circles and topped by halberds) pulled by two men is shown in front of

the troops on foot and on horseback on their way to England, just behind William the Conqueror, before the troops board the boats to cross the Channel.

Several scenes relating to field work (ploughing with an ass-drawn plough, sowing, harrowing with a draught horse wearing a horse collar) or hunting (bird hunting with a sling) are also depicted in the borders.

Lumberjacks and carpenters are depicted building ships for the Norman army to cross the Channel, with lumberjacks using their axes and carpenters using dolloires and other tools. The most famous ship of the Tapestry is the Mora, a ship given to William the Conqueror by his wife Mathilde.

As related too by Pierre Bouet and François Neveux on the [Bayeux Museum's website](#), "English and Norman ships are built in the traditional Viking style. The ships are built using the clinker technique – with large wooden planks overlapping like the tiles on a roof and without a keel, for them to be slender, fast and sea-worthy, even in the rough weather. Clinker built vessels could also be beached on any coast without the need for deep-water harbours. Prows and sterns are decorated with dragon heads, hence the name Drekar ("dragons"). Ships have oars (and oar ports) as well as rectangular sails that can measure up to 150 square metres (179 square yards) and are operated by the pilot using a rope or a rod. An oar placed on the right side of the boat allowed steering."



The 200 embroidered horses "were designed by horse lovers and connoisseurs in the art of riding and fighting on horseback" (Pierre Bouet and François Neveux). According to [these historians](#), "English and Norman horses are depicted the same way in the Tapestry, although Norman horses were smaller, because they were selected and crossed with horses from Spain which had Arab blood.

Destriers can be distinguished from palfreys (used to travelling) and packhorses (used for carrying goods). The horses are drawn with much precision, including the tack (brow band, nose band, crown piece, bit, reins). The

wooden saddle – fastened with a girth across the horse’s belly – has a pommel at the front and a cantle at the back. Riders are depicted in the saddle, their legs outstretched, and their feet in stirrups. The horses are mostly depicted in motion, with different gaits (walk, trot, canter). The horses are also actively engaged in combat. Some horses rush headlong at the enemy while others are struck by the enemies’ axes. Some horses are rearing up while others collapse.”



Thanks to 21st-century technology, we can see the ships, warriors and horses in motion in “[The Animated Bayeux Tapestry](#)”, a video released on 21 September 2009 on YouTube, with animation by David Newton and music and sound design by Marc Sylvan. The video was created as a student project at Goldsmiths College (within the University of London). As explained on YouTube: “Just as the historic original embroidery does, the animation depicts the lead up to the Norman Invasion of Britain in 1066. It starts about halfway through the original work at the appearance of Halley’s Comet and concludes at the Battle of Hastings. Marc Sylvan redid the soundtrack to include original music and sound effects.” Latin inscriptions have been replaced by English inscriptions, which makes it easier for many people to understand the story.

A full-size replica in Reading, England



A [full-size replica](#) of the Bayeux Tapestry was created in 1885-86 at the initiative of Elizabeth Wardle, a skilled embroiderer living in Staffordshire, England. She was the wife of Staffordshire silk industrialist and dyer Thomas Wardle, and a member of the Leek Embroidery Society. The full-size replica came to Reading, Berkshire, in 1895, and has belonged to the Reading Museum ever since.

How did the project start? After viewing a set of hand-coloured photographs of the original Tapestry produced by the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria & Albert Museum), Elizabeth Wardle decided to make a full-sized and accurate replica of the Tapestry because she thought “that England should have a copy of its own”. She also researched the Bayeux Tapestry when visiting Bayeux. Thomas Wardle produced woolen yarns dyed to match the original colours.

In 1885, 35 skilled embroiderers began working on the new tapestry. The ladies of the Leek Embroidery Society were joined by other women from Derbyshire, Birmingham, Macclesfield and London, and work was completed in just over a year. Each embroiderer stitched her name beneath her completed panel.

The replica Bayeux Tapestry was first exhibited in the Nicholson Institute in Leek in 1886. Over the next ten years the tapestry was put on display in towns across Britain and it also travelled to Germany and the United States.



In 1895, the replica Bayeux Tapestry was exhibited in the Town Hall at Reading. The Reading exhibition was supported by Arthur Hill, a former Mayor of Reading. Arthur Hill offered to buy the replica and the Leek Embroidery Society accepted his offer. Arthur Hill then presented the tapestry as a gift to the Reading Museum. The tapestry was one of the first exhibits in the new Art Gallery of the Reading Museum, which opened in 1897. Between 1928 and 1986, the tapestry was lent for exhibitions at museums and galleries across the United Kingdom and worldwide, including South Africa. In 1966, it was displayed at Battle Abbey to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings.

In 1993, a new purpose-built [Bayeux Tapestry gallery](#) was opened in the Reading Museum, and the replica tapestry could be permanently displayed as a whole for the first time since it was acquired in 1895, after being remounted as a continuous strip in a specially designed display case.

Why Reading? The town of Reading is connected to William the Conqueror’s family. William the Conqueror’s eldest son, Duke Robert, ruled in Normandy while his second son William (also known as William Rufus or William the Red) became King William II of England. He was killed (or murdered) by an arrow in 1100 when hunting in the New Forest. As he did not marry and had no children to succeed him, his brother Henry (William the Conqueror’s youngest son) took the throne as Henry I. Henry I’s son was drowned in 1120 on the White Ship while crossing the English Channel – a huge loss, both personal and political. Possibly the loss of this son moved Henry I to found the Abbey at Reading. When Henry I died in 1135, he was buried in the Reading Abbey, in front of the high altar.

A steel mosaic in Geraldine, New Zealand



There are a number of replicas and imaginary continuations of the Bayeux Tapestry in existence. The main ones (in England, Denmark, Canada, the United States and New Zealand) are mentioned in Wikipedia. One of the most original projects is "1066: A Medieval Mosaic", a steel mosaic version of the Bayeux Tapestry created by Michael Linton and his daughter Rachael from 1979 to 2014 in Geraldine, New Zealand.

This 33-year project includes three parts: (a) the re-creation of the original Bayeux Tapestry; (b) an imaginary reconstruction of the missing finale section leading up to William the Conqueror's coronation at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1066; and (c) another imaginary reconstruction of the Battles of Fulford and Stamford Bridge, the two battles that preceded the Battle of Hastings.

The full project – 64 metres (210 feet) long and 30 centimetres (12 inches) high – required 3 million pieces of spring steel for 35 panels. The steel pieces are off-cuts from patterning disks of knitting machines. The off-cuts were fixed to a background, blackened and painted in eight colours close to the original colours of the Bayeux Tapestry.

As explained by Michael Linton on the project's website, the steel pieces came from a Wildt Mellor Bromley 9RJ36 Double Jersey Knitting Machine. The knitting machine had 36 ends of yarn feeding into the machine and was able to produce patterns up to four colours. The machine carried 1,296 disks on 36 drums. There were 72 teeth on an 18-gauge 9RJ disk, and 84 teeth on a 22-gauge disk. Michael Linton broke the teeth from the disks by hand one by one. After breaking the teeth, he washed the pieces (7 square millimetres, 1/96th of an inch) in white spirits. Some pieces were also recovered from earlier works.

Then he prepared small areas (30 centimetres long and 5 centimetres wide) filled with steel pieces and stuck the pieces down onto masking tape (as 400-millimetre strips) to build up a gigantic metal canvas. The metal base was rolled up for easy storage. Many years later, when the metal base was complete, he applied dozens of tins of black shoe polish to the surface of the metal, in order to fill the holes and gaps between the pieces and to colour the background black. A two-metre long cabinet was built for storing the mosaic panels – for the painting phase – for the panels to be taken from the cabinet, placed on the painting table and then returned.

In the meantime, Rachael Linton worked on a paper drawing of the entire length of the tapestry at full scale before painting would commence. For the imaginary parts (parts 2 and 3), the pencil drawings were redrawn many times while researching early medieval history. Michael Linton drew a faint outline with black enamel paint onto the metal surface, to prepare for the detail painting in eight colours. Most of the painting was carried out in the evening under artificial light – after Michael Linton's day job as a knitwear manufacturer and retailer – with a double fluorescent tube placed directly in front of the picture.



Michael Linton added all the details with coloured enamel paint. The paint used was a hard specialist super quality heavy bodied gloss enamel with a drying time of 24 hours. The eight colours (silver, gold, navy, red, forest green, light blue, light green and black) were added a layer at a time, with one full year for the colour silver, two full years for the colour gold, one full year for the colour red, and so on for five more colours. Painting one colour at a time considerably reduced the number of times the paintbrush required cleaning. Glass plates about 10 millimetres above the surface were used to stop contact between hand and metal and avoid any rust.

After painting, the pictures were glued to a 9-millimetre MDF (medium density fiberboard) backing board. Three coats of polyurethane were used to protect the mosaic. The first was a light spray coat followed by a light coat with a brush. The final coat was heavy. The pictures were then scanned before being framed with black-died aluminium pieces cut to the right dimensions.

After the first part (re-creating the Bayeux Tapestry), the second part of the steel mosaic was the Finale Section (400,000 pieces of steel), based on the historical events of that time, after much research work conducted during three more years. The Finale Section tries to recreate a truthful description of what might have been depicted in the missing section of the Bayeux Tapestry, from the end of the Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066) to the coronation of William the Conqueror as King of England on Christmas Day (25 December 1066). It was designed by Rachael Linton and transferred on the metal base by her father.

Then came the third part of the steel mosaic, trying to recreate a truthful description of the Battles of Fulford (16 September 1066) and Stamford Bridge (25 September 1066), that led to the Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066). Also designed by Rachael Linton and transferred on the metal base by her father, the third part was put on permanent display on 14 October 2012 alongside the re-creation of the Bayeux Tapestry (on display since 2001) and the Finale Section.



As for numbers, Michael and Rachael Linton's monumental "[1066: A Medieval Mosaic](#)" (35 panels, 3 million pieces of sprint steel, 450 kilos, 33 years to complete, from 1979 to 2012) includes: (1) the re-creation of the Bayeux Tapestry (18.5 panels, 20 years to complete, from 1979 to 1999); (2) The (imaginary) Finale Section (4.5 panels, 8 metres long, 60 kilos, five years to complete, from 1999 to 2004); and (3) The (imaginary) Battles of Fulford and Stamford Bridge (12 panels, 22 metres long, eight years to complete, from 2004 to 2012).

Some mathematical puzzles (100,000 pieces) were encoded by Michael Linton throughout the mosaic, after he studied the way Anglo-Saxons created secret writing. Encoding puzzles was a popular pastime among Anglo-Saxons in early medieval times.

A textile technician by trade, Michael Linton works as a knitwear manufacturer and retailer in Geraldine, New Zealand, with his wife Gillian. In 2012, he received the Guinness World record for the "World's Largest Steel Mosaic". His daughter Rachael has now settled in London as a [free lance artist](#) specialising in both custom gilding and restoration of gold leaf frame, furniture, architectural and devotional artworks. In fall 2016, the Medieval Mosaic has been on display in England for the first time, in the Battle Abbey, to celebrate the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings.

A finale created in Alderney, Channel Islands



In 2012, 416 residents of Alderney in the Channel Islands created a fictional continuation of the Bayeux Tapestry named "[The Alderney Bayeux Tapestry Finale](#)". Alderney was part of the Norman Duchy when William the Conqueror became King of England, and has stayed an English possession ever since.

As explained on [the project's website](#), the Alderney Tapestry "measures just under 3 metres [10 feet] in length and 50 centimetres [20 inches] in height – compared to the original Bayeux Tapestry which extends to 68,38 metres [224.3 feet]. Yet, Alderney's Bayeux Tapestry Finale has made a big impact on all who have been involved in creating this superb community project. It has captured the interest of the worldwide media and has fascinated hundreds of people who have been involved in the creation of this unique version."

What was the idea behind this project? "Most experts now believe that a piece between 2,5 and 3 metres [8 to 10 feet] depicting the coronation of William I as King of England would have been included at the end of the original Bayeux Tapestry. An embroidered panel produced in the Channel Island of Alderney has now delivered the missing chapter with a plausible conclusion, as a community project turned into biggest stitch-up. Alderney's final chapter, embracing its strong and historic Normandy connection, features the coronation of William at Westminster Abbey and concludes with the construction of the White Tower using stone imported from Caen."

The project was conceived by Kate Russell, a volunteer librarian who became the project coordinator over the years, while artist Pauline Black produced the designs and historian Robin Whicker created the Latin inscriptions.



Kate Russell and Pauline Black started the first stitches of the tapestry on 1st February 2012 in the Alderney Library. They were joined by over 400 people from and off the Island of Alderney – islanders and visitors from all continents – who made Alderney's Bayeux Tapestry Finale one of the biggest community projects of its kind. The stitchers were men and women, boys and girls aged from 4 to 100, including several people with vision problems and one young lady who was blind. Among the stitchers were the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, who visited Alderney on 20 July 2012.

As explained by Kate Russell on [the project's website](#): "The purpose too was to provide an unusual activity for Islanders and visitors to Alderney and an opportunity to bring new people into the Alderney Library, as well as providing a vehicle for acquainting people, especially the children of Alderney, with the events that led to the Channel Islands becoming English possessions. (...)"

The aim was also to create a Finale that would look as though it could have been the original ending – with a slight nod towards the Channel Islands.” In the upper border, we see Wace, the author of the “Roman de Rou” (a Norman chronicle written in the 1160s), who was born in Jersey. In the lower border near the end, we see the animals representing Guernsey (donkey), Jersey (toad) and Alderney (puffin) being encircled by the English lion’s tail.

The Alderney Tapestry depicts four scenes. On scene 1 (14 October 1066), after winning the Battle of Hastings, William has set up his table and tent on the spot where Harold fell. He dines with his half-brothers, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Robert, Count of Mortain. The bodies of the slain lie scattered about where they have fallen. Anglo-Saxon women come to retrieve the bodies of their relatives. The caption reads: “Here Duke William dines.”

On scene 2 (early December 1066), the cities of Romney, Dover, Canterbury and Winchester have submitted to William. London has resisted William, but William has cut them off from resupplies by destroying a path about 20 miles wide to the south and west of London. He has crossed the Thames at Wallingford and has reached Berkhamsted where the London noblemen submit to his rule. The caption reads: “Here the nobles of London surrender.”

On scene 3 (25 December 1066), we see the coronation of William at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day. William is crowned by Ealdred, Archbishop of York, assisted by Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutances, as translator. The captions read: “Here they give the crown of the kingdom to William” as well as “And here the English acclaim the king”. But this acclaim is misunderstood by the Normans as a call for rebellion and, in the ensuing chaos, the Normans outside the Abbey devastate the surrounding houses.

On scene 4 (Christmas Day 1066), the White Tower (later called the London Tower) is shown in outline to indicate that its construction lies in the future. By the time of his coronation, William has chosen the site for its construction and he intends to use the limestone that will be imported from Caen, Normandy. The final caption reads: “The end will be good, as God wills.”



The Alderney Tapestry was completed on 28 February 2013. It was officially unveiled in Alderney on 5 April 2013 in the presence of several officials, including Sylvette Lemagnen, curator of the Bayeux Tapestry Museum in Normandy. Alderney’s Finale was then exhibited in the Bayeux Tapestry Museum from 1 July to 9 September 2014 – under the same roof as the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry – and seen by over 140,000 visitors. A high-quality replica of the Alderney Tapestry can now be seen on the first floor of the museum, above the original Bayeux Tapestry. The Alderney Tapestry went back to Alderney to be permanently displayed in the Alderney Library, where the project

started and where the 416 stitchers worked for one full year.

This community project has also been commemorated with a beautiful set of postage stamps printed on cotton and released in 2014. The stamps are on sale at the Alderney Post Office.

In Fall 2016, the Alderney Tapestry – either the original or a high resolution replica – has taken a roadshow to be exhibited at different historic locations in the Channel Islands (Guernsey and Jersey) and the United Kingdom (Battle, Hastings and Berkhamsted) during the celebrations marking the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings.

A few links

[In English]

[The Bayeux Tapestry](#) – Wikipedia

[The Bayeux Tapestry tituli \[with images\]](#) – Wikipedia

[The Bayeux Tapestry](#) – The whole tapestry section by section by AEMMA

[A panoramic image of The Bayeux Tapestry](#) – Bibliotheca Augustana

[The Bayeux Tapestry](#) – Bayeux Museum

[Britain’s Bayeux Tapestry at Reading Museum](#) – Description

[Britain’s Bayeux Tapestry at Reading Museum](#) – The whole tapestry

[A Guide to the Bayeux Tapestry \[with many links\]](#) – Medievalists.net

[The Animated Bayeux Tapestry](#) – Video by David Newton and Marc Sylvan

[1066: A Medieval Mosaic](#) – In Geraldine, New Zealand

[1066: A Medieval Mosaic](#) – Michael Linton’s Interview

[The Alderney Bayeux Tapestry](#) – In Alderney, Channel Islands

[The Alderney Bayeux Tapestry](#) – Video from the BBC

[The Alderney Bayeux Tapestry](#) – Kate Russell's Interview

[In French]

[La Tapisserie de Bayeux](#) – Wikipédia

[La Tapisserie de Bayeux](#) – Ville de Bayeux (City of Bayeux)

[La Tapisserie de Bayeux](#) – Musée de Bayeux (Bayeux Museum)

[La Tapisserie de Bayeux intégrale](#) – InFrancia.org

[Un historien raconte la Tapisserie de Bayeux](#) – Video by Laurent Ridel

Please see also [other articles and books](#) on medieval art.

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